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## Reform's proposals would turn the British criminal justice system into 'Big Brother'.

UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders, today slammed proposals by think-tank Reform, accusing them of suggesting extreme ideas 'based not even on Orwell fiction but on Channel 4'.

Chief Executive Bobby Cummines, a reformed offender himself, said, "Suggesting the public monitor former offenders via the internet and local TV is scandalously poor thinking. The inspiration for this seems to have come from a summer spent watching Big Brother, rather than serious research. Perhaps we could decide who is released from prison based on a lucrative phone vote?"

Cummines agrees that the public need to know what the system is doing in their name. "Only prisoners and prison staff really know what actually goes on inside prisons. Even judges don't get told what happens after they hand down the sentence."

He also agrees that more power should be devolved to local communities and that local authorities need to take the lead. "When offenders on community sentences carry out jobs that have been identified by the community as important, it's the beginning of the healing process."

However, Cummines is resolute on the dangers of creating an internet database of former offenders with unrestricted public access. "It would cause immense legal, social and ethical problems. It would stoke fears, risk vigilante violence, reduce the chance of successful reintegration and increase crime."

Cummines cites the case of a 14 year old girl who died in 1994 after the house that she was living in was burnt down because it was mistakenly believed to be harbouring a child molester.

ENDS.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Debbie Young on

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## Notes

1. Unlock, the National Association for Reformed Offenders, exists to achieve equality for reformed offenders. It is a unique organisation founded in 1999 by a group of reformed offenders, each of whom, in their own way, successfully rebuilt their lives after serving prison sentences.
2. The UK Government Offender Index currently lists 7.3 million people [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offenderindex1.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offenderindex1.html)
3. Bobby Cummines (Chief Executive) served 13 years in prison, across two sentences, spending many years within the UK's high security prison estate. He is now one of the most widely recognised and passionate advocates of penal reform in the UK, advising Government and the Judiciary and regularly appearing in the media. He advised the Chairman in the Zahid Mubarek Inquiry.
4. The Government's own Social Exclusion Unit identified that the most powerful drivers of crime are community deprivation and income inequalities resulting from unemployment.
5. The drivers of social exclusion include low income, unemployment, education, ill-health, housing issues and past criminal convictions.
6. The cost of re-offending is £11 billion per year.
7. Reform is a think tank whose mission is to set out a better way to deliver public services and economic prosperity. <http://www.reform.co.uk/>